Translating Noh, an Historical Perspective

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Noh drama—both as a stage art and as literature—has fascinated westerners since early contact with Japan in the Meiji period. Beginning in the late nineteenth century westerners intrigued by Japanese arts, like Ernest Fenellosa (1853-1908), studied from noh actors and recorded what they learned. In addition, scholars of Japanese literature, like Arthur Waley (1889-1966), Donald Keene, and Royall Tyler have found the noh texts to be a particularly rich form of expression. As a result, over the past hundfed years much of the noh repertory has been translated into English in a wide variety of forms. This paper discusses the various approaches that have been taken to render the performance and the literary style of noh in English. A survey of translations of noh over the past hundred years discloses that each translator has had to work through progressive steps of deepening understanding. The stage of familiarity with noh practice and with the Japanese language is immediately apparent in the translator's choices of format and style, regardless of when they lived. On the other hand, chronologically each generation of translators also builds on the last, working from ever more sophisticated scholarship more readily available.

Before pursuing these two topics of the individual's travels into the depths of understanding noh and the translator's debt to scholarship in and out of Japan, I want to make a few observations on translation in general.

A translator takes a message expressed in one medium and recreates it in another. The translator of a Japanese text recreates its verbal

meaning in another language. This requires comprehension of the original, fluency in the new language, and an awareness of the audience. Consciously or unconsciously the translator is always making decisions: how much importance to place on the intended meaning, the individual words, the imagery, and the form or flow of the original. These considerations become intensified in the case of poetry, and Japanese poetry presents special problems: *makurakotoba* (pillow words, epithets), *kakekotoba* (pivot words, puns), *monozukushi* (exhaustive listings), *josetsu* (introductory phrases), *honkadori* (allusive variation to previous poems), and *engo* (associated words) all rely on cultural knowledge that has to be laborious explained, abstractly reinvented, or quietly ignored. For *kakekotoba*, for instance, the translator may choose to translate the word twice, once for each meaning, or he may choose to add copious footnotes, or he may catch the general drift and ignore the secondary implications.

Again, the rhythms that inform poetry affect the impact of the words. Should the translator evoke the Japanese rhythms by counting syllables in English? Should he use an established English system of poetic rhythm (like iambic pentameter, with or without rhyme)? Or should he rely on a generalized sense of rhythmic impact without reference to a formal system?

When translating noh, the question of rhythm is compounded by the fact that the noh texts are librettos for performance. The style of poetry reflects a style of singing that is supported by a style of drum accompaniment. To ignore this dimension is to ignore a meaningful aspect of the noh, yet to include it requires inventive manipulation of the visual text: various levels of indentation and spacing of words are two common solutions to showing levels of poetic formality. Japanese scholars reproducing printed texts as literature face the same problem. Similarly both translator and textual scholar must find a way to represent visual aspects of performance like costuming and movement. Again the choices are to detail specifics, to interpret, and to ignore.

1. The individual's travels into the world of noh

Translation serves many purposes for people in different stages of interaction with the original text. It is one of the most intensive forms of reading. Students use the act of translation as a crux for deciphering a text in a foreign language. The first step is often a word-for-word approximation, or crib. Step two would then be working out a rough translation into something other people might understand. Scholars use translation as a research tool. This type of more complex interaction with the text might be seen as step three. The scholar-translator ferrets out the layers of meaning, analyses the impact of the passage, and considers the intent of the author much as a literary critic does, but focuses on the discipline of rendering the original in a new language. Artists and writers use translation is a means of expression: the translator in the fourth stage has totally imbibed the original text, and then choosing a style that fits his purpose freely re-creates it. Clearly most translators are student, scholar and artist and go through several, if not all, of these stages.

Step one

The word-for-word interlineary, or crib, has served as an indispensable first step to understanding noh texts for many foreigners, particularly those who have studied noh chant before gaining a deep knowledge of Japanese language. Judging from his notes stored in the Yale University library and published in *A Guide to Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa's Classic Noh Theatre of Japan*, Earnest Fenellosa is a prime example.[1] Fenollosa's fist lessons from Umewaka Minoru were in 1883, but later between 1896 and 1901 he studied noh chant more intensively, going to many performances and presumably appearing on stage himself in amateur gatherings. To decipher the texts he was singing, he relied on the help of

1) 1994 Miyake, et al. For bibliographical information on all the works cited here, see the listing at the end of the essay,.

a friend, Kiichi Hirata (1873-1943). The resulting notes on noh pieces range from hazy plot summaries, to carefully worked out cribs with an attempt at translation, to prose translations with running commentary on staging.

A good example is the opening *shidai* from *Nishikigi*, one of the most carefully notated of Fenollosa's noh texts and one that was later transformed into English noh rather successfully (if not accurately) by Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Here Fenollosa has copied out the Japanese text in Roman letters and written English equivalents under it. Where there is more than one meaning for a word or phrase, he sets the alternative readings in a column under the appropriate Japanese word. Fenollosa's comments indicate an awareness of grammatical indicators and of double meanings: *engo* and *kakekotoba*. Finally, he puts the words together into a translated sentence.

proper name
(J) Geni ya! Kikite mo Shinobu yama
True! having heard even sweet reminiscence mt.
Indeed! even by hearing this Mt. is near Fukushima
Connected meaning
(Tr) Indeed (that) Shinobu Mountain, (which) even by hearing (the name of it) poetical

(J) Sono Kayoiji wo tadzunen
(adj) (kayoi=to go& (acc) seek—will
that come repeatedly (take=meaning here)
its familliar path
to it
(tr) we think of fondly, I will take the (familiar to others) path to it.

(1994 Miyake 95)

Fenollosa's method in *Nishikigi* shows a need to grasp all the indi-

vidual words and a rudimentary awareness of poetic and grammatical operations. From the stilted, unfinished form of Fenollosa's translation lines, one can assume that though this word-for-word analysis might have produced a sense of the general meaning and a better feel for what he was singing, it probably did not provide true comprehension. Judging from what Pound made of it, Fenollosa's translation effort also did not communicate to the reader unfamiliar with Japanese.

> There never was anybody heard of Mt. Shinobu but had a kindly feeling for it; so I,...may as well be walking up here along the much-travelled road.
>
> (1917/1959 Pound & Fenollosa 76)

Actually, when done carefully, rendering word-for-word correspondences allows for detailed analysis of the relation between text and music as well as text and movement. It is to this purpose that I use it in a number of my own publications.[2] At the same time, an interlineary when well done can serve as a very useful tool for experiencing the original text on its own terms.

Step two.

Many westerners first experiencing Japanese poetry in the original are amazed by how much is expressed in so few words. They are impressed by the associations, innuendos, double meanings, and by the way the main and sub texts interact on numerous levels simultaneously. Thus Step two reaches beyond the word to a fascination with image association and technique. At this stage most students of Japanese are very bound to the Japanese text, wanting to get everything possible out of it. Typically they base their translation not on a libretto (*utaibon*), but on an annotated

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2) *Nonomiya, Nō as Performance, Dance in the Noh Theater,* and *Noh Performance Guides.* (see listing at the end)

printed version with copious footnotes. Also typically, a simple word/phrase/sentence correspondence becomes blatantly insufficient. The text must be filled out. To show the intricacies and interrelationships in the text, some people turn color coding and drawing connecting lines, others to adding columns to the right and left with full versions of original poems and other extra-textual references. At this stage the desire to fully comprehend and to give reality to the experience of the poetic text often spurs the student to translate.

Step three

Step three is a deepening knowledge of and insight into classical grammar. With this comes deeper sensitivity to the well-turned phrase and accuracy in reading the implied within the grammatical forms. In this phase translators are highly indebted to Japanese scholarship. They also tend to translate with a reader in mind, not just as a tool for their own understanding. They often seek publication. Considerations of readership dictate their stylistic choices.

Broadly speaking there are two approaches. The first aims at making the translation read like English, so anyone, even if they have never been to Japan or seen a noh, can appreciate the piece as drama or poetry. The second forces the reader to experience the translation as if he were reading a Japanese text, or seeing a noh performance. To ask the English-speaking reader to read with the mind of a Japanese usually requires the reader to learn new ways of interacting with the printed word.

These two approaches result in visual differences in the way the text is presented on the printed page. While translations aimed at an uninitiated Western audience generally look like a mixture of English prose and poetry, those aimed at the reader reading in a style that imitates noh–slow, sonorous, multi-layered, with back-tracking built into the sentence structure–often look unfamiliar on the page. Royall Tyler in his *Cycles of Noh* (see page 44) series chooses to present the text lines strung together, as they appear in a libretto. By inserting double and triple

spaces here and there, he means to encourage his reader to slow down and to read backwards as well as forwards. Although the resultant stream of phrases presents a challenge, it emulates, he assures us in his introduction, the experience of reading the text as a Japanese would. Recently Michael Emmerich in his translation of *Kagekiyo* has tried to guide the English reader through rhythmic variations of the text by combining a familiar English format with renditions of the denser poetry in oddly spaced intervals. Yet a third attempt at making the printed page a visual rendition of the experience of noh is Will Petersen's "Presentation" of *Yashima*. Phrases, even single words, are given whole lines, and then grouped together by adding spaces between lines and moving the margin. Flute and drum are rendered like spoken words, but put in italics. All three of these texts slow the reader down and force a reconsideration of the reading of individual words for double meanings. They leave the creation of meaningful interpretation to the reader.

Stage four

Stage four reaches beyond technique to seek an interpretive whole. Voice and mood of the whole play as well as of each individual section or line or word are given careful consideration. Thorough research of original sources, authorship, and of Japanese scholarship lie at the base. For most translators, whether or not they have personal experience of performing noh themselves, the performance elements play a part in the interpretive groundwork. The aim is to make the noh accessible in English. Depending on the prospective readership and the purpose of the translation, these tend to have an academic (explanatory) or an artistic bias, and they tend to be more or less descriptive of the movement and music. The development of such translations over time is my next topic.

2. The historical progression of scholarship on noh and its reflection in translation

In the late 19th century when Fenollosa studied noh he had no English translations to turn to, only one English introduction to Japanese poetry (Chamberlain's *The Classical poetry of Japan* 1880), so he basically had to rely on what he could get from his informant and his own intuition. By 1916-17 when Pound reworked Fenollosa notes into a book of plays for publication, several scholarly books on Japanese poetry and several translations of noh had appeared in Western languages, the earliest being a translation of *Funa Benkei* (Benkei on the Boat) into French in 1897.[3] In the process of deciphering Fenollosa's multi-layered notes and approximations of meaning, Pound became fascinated by the force of imagery and its use in the noh. This had profound effects on his own poetry and poetic theory. His renditions of the noh plays, though often off the mark scholastically, are still poetically, imagistically whole and often very moving. Because of his role as editor and advisor to leading poets of the day, like W.B.Yeats and T.S.Eliot, Pound probably had the greatest impact in forming the Westerner's view of noh. Interestingly, he reassessed his initial reservations when he saw an actual performance of noh singing in Paris in the early 20s and a movie of a full performance in 1939 (Miyake xvii).

Arthur Waley, publishing in 1921 only four or five years after Pound, had the great advantage of a thorough knowledge of classical Japanese and access to Japanese scholarship. The latter had burgeoned after the publication of the theoretical works of Zeami in 1908. Waley views the noh as poetry. In his introduction he bemoans the losses that inevitably result from translation and states his personal standards for measuring the quality of a translation.

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3) These include Basil Hall Chamberlain's *Japanese Poetry*, yone Noguchi's *Ten Kiogen in English* and Marie stop's *plays of Old Japan : The Nō*.

> [In my translation of noh] the contrast between the prose and verse has dwindled; the verbal decorations are lost; allusions that the mind should seize in its stride are painfully set out in foot-notes……[but] if I have failed to make these translations in some sense works of art—if they are merely philology, not literature—then I have indeed fallen short of what I hoped and intended (1957 Waley 55)

Waley here points to the hurdles, such as I discussed in the opening section of this essay, that he faced in translation. His statement reflects his sensitivity when reading the Japanese text in the original. He adds to that a rich command of English. At their best, his translations are indeed "works of art." Where they fail, they fail because of lack of direct experience of the staged performance. Indeed, one senses this insufficiency particularly in his attitude towards "woman noh" ("third category" lyrical pieces focused on a long instrumental dance). He included only one such woman's play, *Hagoromo*, among the nineteen noh that he chose to translate. In addition, his comments on *Hagoromo* show uncharacteristic insensitivity to the essence of the piece. He states that the second part of *Hagoromo* "lends itself very ill to translation" and that "the words of the Suruga Dance have no relevance to the play" (1957Waley 217). Actually, the second half enacts the presentation of the Surugamai to mankind and is central to the play.

If Waley's translations lack a performance dimension, Meredith Weatherby's *Birds of Sorrow* (*Utō*), written directly after WWII, is just the opposite. Composed entirely in prose and lacking some of the verbal interplays and poetic perfection of the Japanese, it yet conveys the intensity and pathos of the original in totally accessible language. In addition, the descriptions of staging emphasize the intent of the movements giving them interpretive meaning that fills out the text beautifully. The reader gets a direct experience of the performance of the play.

The first English translations I am aware of that effectively present both the literary and the performance experience as a composite whole

appear *in Japanese Noh Drama* published by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai (NGSK) in the late 1950s (see pages 40-41). In many ways this set of translations constitutes a breakthrough. A product of a committee composed of Japanese scholars working together with westerners, the texts are supported by scholastic introductions, by long explanatory footnotes discussing background material, and by detailed staging notes on costuming and movement. The layout of the movement notation—in a separate right margin illustrated with drawn figures—facilitates following the text during performance. In two important aspects these translations seek to draw the reader into the framework of noh. First they label the actors not only by character (monk, Tadanori) but also by role (*waki, shite*). Second, they present the underlying structure systematically, breaking the acts into numbered units corresponding to scenes (*dan*) and including the Japanese names for the subunits, or *shodan*.

A full discussion the underlying structure of noh in terms of these *shōdan* subunits appeared in Yokomichi Mario and Omote Akira's *Yōkyokushū* in 1960. Yokomichi and Omote show how the *shōdan* define the poetic and musical texture and that there are model progressions of types of *shōdan*. They suggest that the manipulation of *shōdan* might be a key to defining the style of composition of noh playwrights. Their work has had a profound effect on noh academics, an effect that perhaps is discernable already in the NGSK translations published at about the same time. Personally, while I do not turn readily to a translation by Waley or Pound, I still look to the NGSK translations. They are reliable, informative, and visually accessible. Despite criticisms by some people that they are, in Waley's terms, more "philology" than "works of art," I find them quite readable.

Donald Keane's *Twenty Nō Plays*, published in 1970, seeks to compensate for any lack of artistic expression in the NGSK series. The book grew out of a seminar on classical literature where this leading scholar and translator had promising graduate students each take a noh and work on it. The approach was literary, and also backed by personal experiences of

noh performance. Many of the contributors went on to become noh scholars and the teachers of the next generation of Japanese literature specialists. Despite some discrepancy in quality among translators, these translations are highly effective as literature in English and reflect a depth of study greatly indebted to advances in Japanese scholarship. *Twenty Nō Plays* did a lot to make noh available to the interested westerner. As with the NGSK translations, sketched figures illustrate important stage action. Unlike the NGSK translation, however, *shōdan* structure is not indicated, even though many of the translators were working from the Yokomichi-Omote texts. In as much as they set literary styles, these translations look forward; in as much as they ignore structural indicators (*shōdan*), they are behind their time. No decent subsequent translation leaves out the *shodan* names (even if the translator is not quite sure what they imply).

Two of Keane's students came to exemplify two approaches to noh studies. Royall Tyler defended noh as literature, publishing first his *Cycles of Noh* in the Cornell East Asia Series discussed above, and then his *Japanese Noh Dramas* with Penguin in 1992. Karen Brazell focused on performance. She worked together with me analyzing how all the elements in noh interact to form a unity of expression. *In Noh as Performance, An Analysis of the Kuse Scene of Yamamba* we discuss text, rhythm, singing, instrumentation, dance, costumes and masks separately and then put everything together into an illustrated score with explication and translation. We used the system of score plus literary translation again in *Dance in the Noh Theater.* In order that the reader could readily make correlations between the English text and performance elements, it was very important that every English line correspond to a Japanese line. Due to the difference in grammar systems of the two languages, this is not an easy task. In addition to readable translations, we included word for word metaphrases under the Japanese text in Roman letters. This was so the reader could match individual movements, written over the Roman letters, with meaning. Although the matching of English words to Japanese

words sounds similar to the interlinearies that Fenollosa made and that I used in an early article on *Nonomiya*, there is one big difference. We did not want to crowd up the page with alternate readings and we did want the basic meaning to be comprehensible in the order of word appearance without reference to the translation, so we used only one line for the English and sometimes resorted to putting grammatical or poetic keys in parenthesis.

My work with Richard Emmert in making a series of seven *Guides to the Noh* for the National Noh Theater builds on the concept of a metaphrase. For these the Japanese text in Chinese characters as well as Roman letters is given with a metaphrase on the left page, while a literary translation and musical/kinetic description of the *shodan* is given on the right. We used underlining and italics to indicate poetic density. Still, without reference to a proper translation, no matter how careful one is, a metaphrase is likely to breed misreadings of the text.

Performance considerations also informed Kenneth Yasuda in his translations of noh, which began as theater guides made for the Kita school. He splits his pages in half, with Japanese on the left, English on the right. Stage directions are in italics and set to a far right margin (see pages 50-53). Not only has he matched the lines of text, but he has also matched their syllabic count. Although this is actually not necessary for setting the sung line to the drum rhythms, it is not a bad poetic discipline, even in English. The poetic effectiveness of this method will become clearer through a comparison of translations of a single noh.

3. A comparison of several translations of the noh *Izutsu*

Many fine literary translations of noh have appeared over the past thirty years. Most include discursive introductions and footnotes on background and poetic techniques. Some emphasize inter-textual context (Janet Goff, Susan Matissoff), some emphasize exhaustive technical readings (Shimazaki, Hare), others draw on context and literary implication

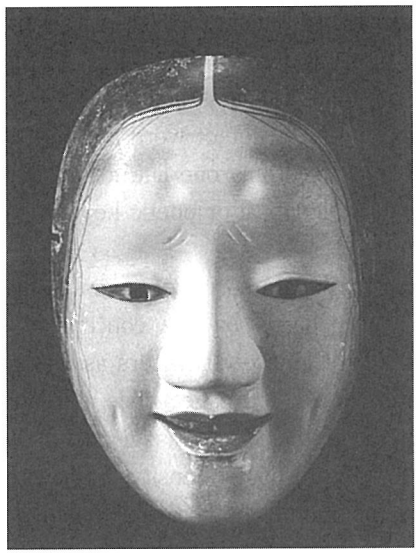

photo 1. Masugami mask. Ii family. Edo period.

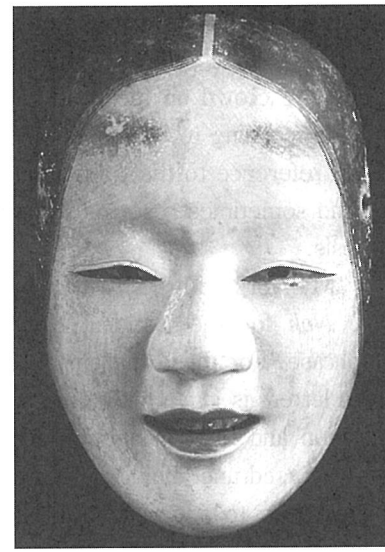

photo 2. Wakaonna mask. Ii family. Edo period.

(Tyler), and still others point to sociological or political contextualization (Brown, Terasaki). These are only a few of a long list. I would like to end my discussion by comparing a number of translations of select sections from the second act of *Izutsu*.

I chose these passages because they contain lines that have led to radically different interpretations of the piece. Although in modern performance tradition *Izutsu* is considered to be permeated with gentle nostalgia, recent research on performance history has brought to light that in the 16th century *Izutsu* was apparently sometimes seen as a "crazed woman" noh (1992Tyler 123; 1983 Itō 403-404). In the *Hachijō Kadenshō*, written some time in the second half of the 16th century, the mask mentioned for *Izutsu* is Masugami, a young woman's mask with a troubled expression emphasized by dimples in the center forehead (photo 1). The late 16th, early 17th century priest-actor Shimotsuma Shōshin mentions that the instrumental dance performed in *Izutsu* could be a short, intense *hataraki*,

presumably the crazed-woman dance known as *kakeri*.[4] This style of performance contrasts with in the modern noh practice, where the actor wears the elegant young woman mask of Wakaonna (or its equivalent; photo 2) for the whole play and dances the long, slow, sublime *jonomai*. Royall Tyler in his introductory remarks to his translation of *Izutsu* in *Japanese Noh Dramas*, points to the section I analyse below as the key to the differing interpretations of this noh (1992:123).

The noh *Izutsu* (The Well) relates the story of a woman, Ki no Aritsune's daughter, who ended up marrying the boy next door, Ariwara no Narihira. He was a great lover-poet living in the 9th century and as the "man of old" (*mukashi otoko*) is accepted as the central figure of the *Tales of Ise*, a collection of episodes about exchanges of poems that are loosely bound into a narrative structure. When Narihira's attentions shift to another woman, his wife, Ki no Aritsune's daughter, remains faithful to him. His recognition of her constancy brings him back to her. This story is related in the 23rd episode of the *Tales of Ise* and establishes the mood of poignant reminiscence that permeates the performance of *Izutsu* in modern practice.

Commentaries on the *Tales of Ise* written in the medieval period several centuries after its conception linked two other episodes to Ki no Aritsune's daughter: the 17th and the 24th. In the 17th episode Narihira returns after a long absence and his wife composes a poem suggesting she has waited and waited for him. This poem appears in the opening passage (*issei*) of the second act of *Izutsu*. Shortly after the poem, in the same passage, a portion of a poem from the 24th episode is inserted as an introductory phrase (*joshi*) modifying the word "year". The 24th episode de-

4) While the *Hachijo kadensho* lists Masugami for *Izutsu* (『古代中世芸術論—芸の思想・道の思想２』岩波書店, 1995, 591頁), Shimotsuma does not suggest the use of the Masugami mask, (he mentions a choice of Koomote, Fukai, or Zo) but he does allows for either the *hataraki* or a long instrumental dance, *mai* (下間少進の『少進能伝書』と『童舞抄中』(法政大学能楽研究所編, 能楽資料集成３, 古川久, わんや書店, 1974, (I：76頁　II：151-152頁).

scribes how the wife, after waiting for more than three years for Narihira to return and believing the relationship finished (or him dead), finally decides to give in to the advances of another man. On the eve of her new betrothal, Narihira reappears. She desperately tries to follow him as he turns away, but in the process of pursuing him dies of exhaustion. The references to these two episodes in the *issei* of the noh is the justification for interpreting *Izutsu* as a crazed-woman play.

In looking at various translations of the passage, I want to investigate the extent to which one can decipher differences in interpretive emphasis in the translations. For instance, how much does Tyler's choice of words and format change between 1980 (when he read the play as sublime nostalgia) and 1992 (when he read it as a deranged woman play), and how are the changes in wording relevant to his different interpretations? In the process I would like to point out some of the choices that he and others made while translating. I will discuss the translathions in chronological order, since translators are generally aware of what has preceded them. To simplify the comparison, I will focus on the opening passage (*issei*) from the second act of *Izutsu* including the poem (A) from the 17th episode of the *Tales of Ise* and (B) the reference to the 24th episode later in the same section. In addition, I will look at (C) the beginning section of the final dance (*noriji*) of the play, which ties all the elements together into an imagistic whole. This final dance section starts by echoing a poem from the 23rd episode of the *Tales of Ise* where Narihira, the amorous youth, proposes to his childhood companion as they stand next to the well they played around as children. It is this poem that gives the noh *Izutsu* its name; it is introduced earlier in the play in the context of retelling the story of the growing mutual affection of the childhood friends when they turned adolescent. Its reiteration at the end of the play can be interpreted as mirroring the time when the lovers were young (an interpretation of the noh play as nostalgic sublimity) or as incorporating the reassessments of hindsight of the mature woman who was later so devastatingly neglected, yet who even after death clings to her husbands image (deranged-woman interpretation).

A) The poem from the 17th episode of the *Tales of Ise* runs as follows

	Romanization	Word equivalents (not a translation)
あだなりと	*adanari to*	Inconstant is
名にこそ立てれ	*na ni koso tatere*	the name applied to
桜花	*sakurabana*	cherry blosoms;
年に稀なる	*toshi ni mare naru*	through the year rare
人も待ちけり	*hito mo machikeri*	person also awaited

Translations of the head word *adanari* include "fickle," "fruitless," "frail," "faithless," "inconstant," and "shifty." In Japanese it describes the cherry blossoms (*sakurabana*) mentioned in the third line and also "man who rarely visits" (*toshi ni mare naru hito*) of the forth and fifth lines. So one question is who/what is "*adanari*" and why? To answer this the translator in need of a subject pronoun must decide who is speaking and whom/what is being spoken about. The final word *machikeri* means "waited" and one might also ask who is waiting for whom? The variations in possible interpretations will become clear as I go through the translations below.

B) The partial quote of a poem from the 24th episode of the *Tales of Ise* runs

真弓槻弓	*Mayumi tsukiyumi*	straight bows 'moon' bows,
年を経て	*toshi o hete*	the years go by

Here *mayumi tsukiyumi* is an introductory phrase modifying "the years go by." For the general meaning of the passage the reference to "bows" is superfluous except as an emphatic way to characterize the passage of time. They are easily passed over. In the translations below I will look at whether they are ignored in favor of clarity, or, if translated, with what intent?

C) The well poem that begins the final dance (*noriji*) goes

筒井筒	zutsu izutsu	well curb
井筒にかけし	izutsu ni kakeshi	at the well curb set
まろがたけ	marogatake	measure heights
生ひにけらしな	oi ni kerashi na	grown taller

生ひ(/老い) にけるぞや	oi ni keru zo ya	grown up/old

The passage begins with reiteration of the word "well": *tsutsu izutsu izutsu*. When sung, this repetition of similar sounds starts low and slow, and gradually rises to the middle pitch and finally flows up to the high pitch. To catch the impact of this pulsing crescendo in English is one of the challenges of translating this play. A *tsutsu* is a tubular shaped object and when combined with "well" suggests both the depth of the well and the structure built above the ground around the well, or the well curb. In Japan the well curb is generally a square wooden framework much like the shape of the Chinese character for well 井.

Measuring their heights against the well, the young lovers found they had grown taller, i.e. old enough to court. The Japanese "*oi ni kerashi na*" is followed immediately by a reiteration in slight variation "*oi ni keru zo ya.*" The characters used to write "oi" can either be written with the character for "to grow[tall]" 生 or the character for "to get old" 老. Different librettos use different combinations. Even the Japanese scholars disagree in their interpretations. Ito Masayoshi in his annotations of the text claims that since the passage is one of remembrance of youthful times, implications of old age are totally inappropriate. Given the 16th century interpretation featuring a deranged woman's mask, however, others argue that the character for "grow old" is highly appropriate.

The translations of *Izutsu*

In the following discussion I have tried to reproduce the layout and formatting of each of the translations according to the original, as the visual impact and conventions for distinguishing the style—prose, recitative, strict poetic style, and quoted poetry—are important. The use of bold-faced type and underlining is mine, and intended to highlight the passages discussed. An asterisk* indicates footnotes in the original text.

1) 1955 translation by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai in *Japanese Noh*

Drama (vol. I, p. 103,104)

A) DAUGHTER "Though people call them shifty,
Sashi **Yet** the cherry-blossoms never fail
Him who seeks my garden once a year
Less for my sake than for theirs."*

Direct quotations of poems are put in quotation marks, and footnoted. Although the footnote tells us this is Narihira's poem, the translation reads as if spoken by a woman, not Narihira. The basic sense rendered here is that the speaker is jealous of the cherries, because it is for the cherries more than for her that the man visits once a year.

B) **Many a year has passed with varying fortunes**
Since Narihira and I played by the well curb

Rather than translate the "bow" introductory phrase, the translation here vaguely suggests that over the years not all was perfect. This is an example where a poetic complexity has been ignored in favor of clarity. Indeed, the rendering is so generalized that it does not even merit a footnote, and thus all reference to the 24th episode of the *Tales of Ise* has been erased. The translation, of course, predates research illuminating the interpretive importance of the reference.

C) DAUGHTER "Standing against the well-curb,
CHORUS Standing against the well-curb,
As children we compared our heights.
DAUGHTER But I
CHORUS Have grown much taller."
DAUGHTER And much older.

Though the meaning and imagery are clear, the rhythm of "tsutsu izutsu" is lost in the first two lines. On the other hand the indentation of the 5th line cleverly helps the reader sense the continuity of the shared lines. The

6th line makes a contrast between taller and older (which might or might not be in the original) but does not mimic the repetition of form. Overall one might say the translation does its job but lacks poetic inspiration.

As mentioned earlier, the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai (NGSK) translations are carefully worked out, with detailed footnotes and every is effort made at creating an accessible, easily understood text. In addition, layout and general organization bring out the structure of the piece. The inclusion of illustrative figures and stage directions in a right-hand marginal commentary (not included above) greatly facilitate the ease with which one can follow the action on stage during a performance. The deficiency lies primarily in the poetic impact of the English text: never bad, but not necessarily inspiring.

2. 1977 translation by Shimazaki Chifumi in *THE NOH*, Vol III *Woman Noh*, Book 2, pp. 64-68 .

A) Sashi *awazu* SHITE

"Though inconstancy is the name attached to the cherry blossom,
For one who comes but seldom in a year it has waited."*

In Shimazaki's translation, *adanari*, "inconstancy," refers to a single cherry blossom, the "it" of the second line. That the waiting cherry is symbolic of the woman who composed the poem is spelled out clearly in the footnote. "One" in line two is the man who visits. She is begging him to appreciate how she has waited, despite rumors of her inconstancy.

B) **Since** my maidenhood days by the well curb long ago,
Swift as arrows have months and years of intimacy passed,*
And no longer alive is Narihira.

The quote from the 24th episode of the *Tales of Ise*, (*mayumi tsukiyumi toshi o hete*), has been translated symbolically, first in the words "swift as

arrows have months and years passed" and then by the addition of the word "intimacy." The grammatical sense, however, is at odds with Shimazaki's extensive and lucid footnote. The translation seems to imply, "we have spent together years of intimacy since the time you courted me." The footnote, on the other hand, states that many years have gone by since the time when the two were lovers, and perhaps their married years were not necessarily long. The insertion in the translation of the interpretive word "intimacy" is what causes the misrepresentation. It is unfortunate because it has no specific referent in the original.

On the other hand, Shimazaki's footnotes are always thorough and enlightening. Here she explains not only the source poem from the *Tales of Ise*, but also the poem on which the quote is based. In addition she points out the double reading of *tsukiyumi* as both "spindle tree bow" and "moon bow." She adds that when "moon" is read as "month" it connects to "year" and creates the sense of passage of time.

C)	*Noru*	"The well curb round—"
	Danced by	*JI*
	the shite	"The well curb round,
	to the end	On the well curb oft leaned I
		SHITE
		To measure my height.
		JI
		It seems to have grown—"
		SHITE
		It has grown old, indeed.

First one might note an improvement over NGSK in the rhythm of the "tsutsu izutsu" line set up by the repetition of "l"s and "r"s. The inversion of subject and verb in the second line, however, is distracting and does not seem to serve a rhythmic, sonorous, or syntactic purpose. Finally, the pronoun "it" in the 4th and 5th lines causes confusion: the antece-

dent for "it" is presumably "height," which yields "my height seems to have grown" and "my height has grown old." The intended subject of "grow" is, of course, either "I" or "we."

Unfortunately, Shimazaki's translation suffers from insufficient familiarity with the English language resulting in misleading choices, even though she has deep comprehension of the original. One turns to her books for their introductions, footnotes, and sections on comprehensive background. The inclusion of a parallel text in Romanized Japanese makes them a handy tool for reading the original and following a performance.

3. 1978 translation by Royall Tyler in *Granny Mountains: A Second Cycle of Nō Plays, pp. 70-71.*

Royall Tyler's first translation of *Izutsu* experiments with layout to try to simulate the experience of reading a Japanese noh libretto. He puts poems in single quotations and indicates the singing style with shorthand notation: here "off—w" refers to the passage being sung in unmetered rhythm to the accompaniment of drums (w = with drums) playing independent rhythms (off: *awazu*). He includes stage movement within the text, placing it between parentheses.

A) SASHI

off—w

DOER 'Fickle's the name you've made yourself, cherry blossom; a man **too I've** longed for, the year round rare.'

In Royall's version, the poet is admonishing the cherry for its "bad" reputation, but then sympathizes, admitting that the poet, too, has been waiting for a man who hardly ever comes. Through the repetitive use of the fricatives "f" and "v" and the soft "y" and "r," he sets up an internal rhythm that enhances the flow of feeling.

B) the old days of cradle well cradle (turning front again) **years have**

flown by till now that world's lost Narihira's keepsake cloak I don—

"Years have flown by" incorporates the sense of "time flies like an arrow" to evoke the "bow" image of the original, without specifically mentioning either bow or arrow. Tyler, thus, summarizes the sense of the introductory phrase, but leaves the imagery vague so it does not disturb the overall flow of meaning. By running his phrases together he manages to add another layer to the main meaning of "time has passed": he suggests also that the tender youthful days associated with their romance around the well are a thing of the past.

As mentioned before, Tyler's desire is for the reader to slow down, backtrack, and discover the multilayered text within the flow of reading. The next lines are a nice example of how he creates English pivot words (*kakekotoba*). One must read the words in overlapping units: "till that world (is) lost"→ "that world (has) lost Narihira" → "Narihira's keepsake." Put in other words: "the sweet years of love have passed" → "Narihira has died" → "the keepsake he left me."

C) NORIJI
Onori—w
'Cradle well cradle well cradle that told
DOER who was the taller,
CHORUS I've grown up, love…'
DOER I've grown old, yes!

The rhythm created in the first line of alternating hard and soft consonants deftly imitates the repetition in the words "*zutsu izutsu*." Its sound effectiveness justifies it, even though there is no such thing as a well cradle. The nursery-rhyme imagery and rhythm help establish the atmosphere of nostalgia for childhood that is a part of the background behind the poem.

By making the subject of "*oi ni kerashi na*" be "I", Tyler gives the

final two lines a simple intimacy and very engaging naiveté. Imitating the parallel structure of the Japanese text, he repeats the beginning of the lines, but changes their ends.

In his 1978 translations, Tyler managed to mimic the form of the Japanese sentences and be true to the grammar while sticking to the basic text without adding explanations. In addition, he has established a lilting rhythmic flow to the words that creates a sustained movement. The experience of reading becomes a creative act where the reader is forced to participate in the evocation of meaning and image. At best Tyler manages to get his English reader to catch the "allusions that the mind should seize in its stride" that Waley so regretted having to belabor by adding explanations and footnotes. At worst his translations in this series are obscure and baffling.

4. 1992 translation by Royall Tyler in *Japanese Nō Dramas*, pp. 130-131.

When Tyler retranslated *Izutsu* he wrote for a generalized international audience with little or no experience of noh and chose a more familiar format. He labels the speakers by their character (Lady, not Doer) and he gives each poetic phrase a separate line. In addition, he uses progressive indentations to indicate level of poetic engagements: Prose has a margin closest to the left. Lines in 7 + 5 syllables are indented and direct quotes of source poems further indented to the right.

A) LADY (*sashi*)

Fickle they are,
or so people say,
these cherry blossoms,
who have **yet** been pining
for one rare all year round.*

Tyler has recast the poem. The poet comments on the cherries, contrasting their reputation (what people say about them) with their true feeling

—pining for someone who rarely appears. Rather than insert "I" in the second half, he maintains a single perspective, but through the use of personification sets up an emotional identification with the cherries' psyche. Of the translations discussed so far this comes closest to expressing a desire to be seen as faithful despite superficial evidence to the contrary. When he retranslated this passage referring to the 17th episode of the *Tales of Ise* he emphasized it as central to his interpretation of the noh play as a whole. The new version has lost the accusatory stance of his early translation and gained a unity that resounds with a plea, most likely unheeded, to be correctly understood. The ironic parallel with the main story of the 23rd episode when Narihira does recognize his wife's faithfulness and return to her is clearer than in his earlier translation.

B) Since those old well-cradle days,
the days, the months, the years have passed,*
till now, in a life long lost....

Here Tyler tries to catch the feel of the cumulative repetition (***mayumi tsukiyumi***) in Japanese by creating his own cumulative series based on the intended meaning of the passage of time. He has invented an English introductory phrase for "years."

C) For the opening to the final dance section he has not changed a word, just the arrangement on the page.

CHORUS cradle, well-cradle
well-cradle that told
LADY who was the taller,
CHORUS I've grown up, love...
LADY I've grown old, yes!

In summary, although it is hard to tell if even a perceptive reader would

pick up the depth of difference in Royall's readings of *Izutsu* without being alerted to it in his introductions, he has recast his translation of A) and B) to give the first more of a sense of self-justification and the second a clearer emphasis on the introductory phrase.

Before Tyler came out with his second translation of *Izutsu*, two other translations of the piece appeared: one in 1986 by Tom Hare and the other in 1989 by Kenneth Yasuda. Both these people had background in the performance of noh as well as an interest in its literary intricacies, but their purposes for translating were very different.

5. 1986 translation by Thomas Blenheim Hare in *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*, pp. 150-152

Thomas Hare, a student of Yokomichi's, worked his PhD thesis into a carefully documented book analyzing Zeami's style. In it he analyses stylistic characteristics that he feels typify the works of the seminal creator of noh, Zeami Motokiyo (1363?-1443?). He centers his discussion around concepts of three different acting/composition styles described by Zeami as the *santai*, or "three modes." After an introductory discussion of each mode, Hare illustrates it with examples from plays known to be by Zeami. His discussion of the female mode (*nyotai*) includes a translation and interpretation of *Izutsu*. The text is broken into units and interspersed with detailed explications. He gives each section in Romanized Japanese first, followed by a translation into English. Every line is numbered and the speakers indicated by letters: "s" for *shite,* "w" for *waki* and "c" for chorus.

A) Sashi

150 s "Cherry blossoms have a name for faithlessness, they scatter fruitlessly,
Yet they have waited, as have I, for one who comes so rarely through the year."

The poet is talking about the cherry blossoms in the third person. The explanation for why the blossoms are thought of as faithless ("they scatter fruitlessly") is gratuitous, but not off the mark and allows for the alliteration of "f" sounds, which adds a feel of rhythmic cadence. The "yet" that begins the second line suggests that the blossoms and the poet (I) are far from faithless, but have waited patiently for someone they can barely hope to expect.

B) Many years have come and gone since I was nineteen,
Many times the bowed moon has grown full,

Here Hare has managed to bring in complexities of imagery that are part of the original and admirably relate them to the flow of meaning. "Come and gone" in the upper line associates with the waxing and waning of the moon (*tsuki of tsukiyumi*) in the second line. "Bow" (*yumi of mayumi tsukiyumi*) is embedded in the word "bowed" that modifies "moon" and describes its crescent shape, another reference to waxing and waning that creates a sense of time passing.

C)	*Noriji*	"Well curb,
	169 s	
	c	On the well curb,
		On the well curb
	s	Once we marked our height.
	c	But I've grown taller since I saw you last..."
	s	I've grown old so many years have passed,

Visually each line is longer than the last, creating a cumulative impact, and the first three lines start with "O," a letter that repeats in the following two lines in the key words "grown," "old," and "so." Hare also catches the cumulative singsong impact of the original through repetition of "well curb" and he ties the last two lines together with a rhyme (last—passed),

thereby emphasizing their contrast. The explanatory latter half of each of these last two lines clarifies rather than disrupts.

Hare's translation, with its occasional iambic pentameter and rhymes, incorporates English poetic formalities. It is a tribute to his artistry that neither his non-Japanese stylistics nor the explanatory insertions disrupt the overall flow of words and meaning. Since he follows each section with a detailed explication, he does not use footnotes. The translations serve as a reference for analysis of the stylistics of the original Japanese text.

6. 1989 translation by Kenneth Yasuda in *Masterworks of the Noh Theater*, pp.222-225

Kenneth Yasuda's book of noh translations grew out of performance guides he wrote shortly after WWII for Kita-school productions. He prefaces the translations with detailed explications of movement, music, and text. He bases this not only on scholarly textual studies, but also on performance comments by actors and critics. The early translations use Sanari Kentarō's texts, the best available right after the war when he started his work, but later revisions rely on Yokomichi and Omote: he comments that "The Iwanami *Koten bungaku* series is the most reliable and helpful."

In Yasuda's lengthy analysis of *Izutsu* he describes it as a "diaphanous, luminous glissando, ringing the changes of a tender lost love" (1989:187) based on episode 23 in the *Tales of Ise*. He is clearly disturbed by the inclusion of "extraneous" poems from other parts of the *Tales of Ise*, commenting that "narrowly considered in their own contexts in the *Tales*, they seem to go against the grain of the play." He is unaware that in the medieval commentaries episodes 17 and 24 are tied to episode 23, and unaware of the 16th century stage practice. Given the period when he worked on the translations and his main sources, this is totally understandable. Yasuda's translations indicate the *shodan* units as well as the

singing styles.

A) [8] (*Sashi; awazu, yowagin*)

Ada nari to	"Fruitless, and too frail—
Na ni koso tatere	such is the reputation
Sakurabana	of cherry blossoms,
Toshi ni mare naru	though for one who seldom comes
Hito mo machikeri	throughout the year, they waited.

Yasuda uses the 5 and 7 syllable units, rather than more common 12 syllable units as the basis for his English line of poetry. He also matches the number of syllables in English to those in Japanese. He is thus bound by much stricter regulation of word order and rhythm. This accounts for the rendering *ada nari* to in four words. His choice of images "fruitless" (without product, in vain) and "frail" (weak, destructible) point to the essence of the ornamental cherry blossom, but not directly to the idea of inconstancy or fickleness expressed in other translations. He maintains the objective third person, but implies the correlation with the poet's feeling through personification. Repetition of "f" sounds and the visually similar "though" and "throughout" resonate in ways similar to the repetition of "na" sounds in the original.

B)

Mayumi tsukiyumi	many moons have come and gone,
Toshi o hete	drawn like crescent bows*

Here Yasuda has kept the metaphor of "bows" found in the Japanese and used "moons" to express passage of time. He has given himself the freedom of carrying the image across poetic lines and not translating "toshi o hete" literally. His lengthy footnote identifies the original passage and explains the poetic intricacies, but does not integrate the meaning into the play as a whole.

C) Shite

(*Onori, au, yowagin*)

tsutsu izutsu by the round well-curb

[*The shite moves forward slightly, toward the well curb.*]

Chorus

tsutsu izutsu "By the round well-curb

izutsu nikakeshi our heights we used to measure

Shite

Maro ga take now that little boy

Chorus

Oinikerashi na has out grown the marks you made …

[*the shite makes the hiraki movement, facing stage front. She extends the arms away from the body and downward at the sides as she steps back on the left foot, then right and left, and stops. At the conclusion, with the arms held outward and downward at the sides, an important, formal stance is created. The following line is sung with slow deliberation.*]

Shite

(*Onori, au, yowagin*)

oinikeru zo ya has outgrown his childhood days!

Yasuda keeps his readers attentive to stage details by placing them in italics aligned at the far left margin. Music is noted in parenthesis ( ), while movement is described in square brackets [ ]. I am intrigued that though he goes to great detail in his description of the *hiraki* (opening arms while stepping backward), possibly the most frequent pattern in noh dance, he does not indicate how the particular *hiraki* performed here differs from the standard: low and ponderous. Nor does he indicate the previous distinctly mimetic movement where the dancer raises the extended right arm holding the fan by the rib to spread vertically so that it seems to trace the growing stature of the child turned adult.

As with Tyler and Hare, Yasuda has expressed the rhythmic re-

petition of the original with alliteration of "r"s and "l"s. He has emphasized the slight variation of the last two lines by putting them in parallel grammar, and changing the verbal objects. Of interest is that he keeps the whole section within the framework of the young-adult memory (生/生) with no sense of projecting into the mind of the long-married or already dead woman (老). His use of pronouns "our," "we," "you," and "his" rather than "I" also reflect this interpretation. Attributing the last line given to the male suitor follows the original in the *Tales of Ise*.

Yasuda shares with the next translaor, Karen Brazell, a wish to bring the stage experience into his translation. His rendering of the text into counted syllables matching those in the Japanese text comes, at least in part, from his interest in creating a text that can be performed in English in noh style, matched to the beats of the drum.

7. 1998 translation by Karen Brazell in *Traditional Japanese Theater* (pp.154-156)

Published as a part of an ambitious volume containing examples from many genres of Japanese theater, including also *kyōgen, bunraku, kowaka,* and *kabuki*, this translation of *Izutsu* is one of several that the compiler did herself. It has been used to make subtitles for a commercial video of *Izutsu*.

A) SHITE

"They've earned a name
for fickleness, these cherry blossoms,
yet they await a man who hasn't come in months."*

By moving "for fickleness" to the second line, Brazell emphasizes these words, puts them in visual contrast to "yet they wait" and retains the brevity of the opening line of the original. The perspective of the poet talking about the cherries is maintained throughout and the overall impact

is a statement of patient constancy against all odds and despite a reputation of the opposite. The footnote explains the source and that the poet, who was chiding her lover for neglecting her, was identified in the medieval chronicles with Ki no Aritsune's daughter of the well story.

B) Since our long-ago days at the wooden well,
"the years have flown like fleeting arrows,"*
and now he is gone....

By placing the line in quotation marks, Brazell identifies it as referring to a poem and her footnote relates the story from episode 24 of the *Tales of Ise*. Like Shimazaki, she has interpreted the listing of bows as symbolic of swift flying time. The alliteration of "f" mimics the repetition of "yumi" in the original.

C) Noriji *Chanting in the melodic mode to a steady beat* (ōnori)
SHITE:
The wooden water well
Goes toward the prop
CHORUS
"The wooden water well
has a wall that
SHITE
Measures my height;
Raises her open fan
CHORUS:
It seems I have grown,
SHITE
Indeed I've grown up!"
Deep in thought, she spreads her arms.

Like Yasuda, Brazell details both music and movement, but unlike Yasuda,

she tries to keep this short and unobtrusive. Her placement of the *hiraki* (spreads arms) a line later than Yasuda might reflect differences in original text.

Brazell has taken the stage prop as her mental image of the well, so unlike all the translators who followed the NGSK in calling the *izutsu* a "well curb" and giving it a round structure, she makes her well square and gives it a wall of wood. This occasions the choice of a different letter to alliterate: The deep, quiet character of "w" reflects the low tones of "zu" and "tsu." She puts the whole passage in the first person and includes the last line in the youthful memory (生/生). The phrase "I have grown" provides the parallel structure of the last two lines; the difference in impact of the two lines is expressed in "it seems" versus "indeed-...grown up."

4. In conclusion

Although ultimately the success of a translation depends on the reading experience of the totality, a close look at these short segments has revealed differences in approach, in each translator's interaction with the original, in expected readership, and in intended use.

Each of the translations can be understood in light of the varying preoccupations of the translator: in poetic technique, in literature, and in performance. The translators also presume different audiences and purposes. Translations meant to be taken to the theater as performance guides, such as Yasuda's (and those I did with Emmert) have the Japanese text along side the English. Translations intended to provide insight into the original Japanese text, such as Shimazaki's and Hare's, include a Romanized Japanese version for the purpose of literary scrutiny. Such translations are supplemented by scholarly explication of poetic devices and appeal to a readership acquainted with the Japanese language.

On a different tack, Tyler in his earlier *Cycle* translations (and Emmerich) bends his English to mimic the act of reading the Japanese and

avoids footnotes. Even if the reader knows no Japanese, through the process of deciphering these translations, he will learn to experience the style of the original from the inside. The intent is that he will think as a Japanese would while he reads. The burden of the translation is on literary aspects, though performance elements are noted in passing.

In contrast, Waley, NGSK, Tyler's Penguin book, and Brazell set out to introduce their subject to a literate readership that does not necessarily have any knowledge of Japan. They want their English to communicate the subtleties of the original, gain a poetic integrity within the context of English conventions, and be totally accessible to the non-informed reader. Introductory essays, footnotes, and commentaries fill in background and interpretive details.

Even the short excerpts given here make evident that the translator is bound by the grammatical rules that underlie the thought patterns of both the original language and the target language. For example, while in Japanese the subject is often presumed rather than stated, the subject's identity being implied by the verbal formulation and other indicators, in English a noun or pronoun must appear as the subject in order to form a complete sentence. It becomes necessary, therefore, to state what is implied, to make concrete what is left ambiguous. The cherry blossom(s) in the poem quoted in passage (A), for instance, were variously translated as 'it," they," and "you." The choice of pronoun sets the atmosphere and interpretation of the translated poem. Such choices expose the process by which the translator turns a linguistic demand into a creative art.

The comparison of translations highlights not only this poetic process that goes into the creation of a translation but also the way in which translations have become more finely tuned in tandem with progress in medieval studies and noh research. Before researchers brought to light 16th century staging for *Izutsu*, the atmosphere of sweet nostalgia was taken for granted, but after the possibility of interpreting this noh to be in the crazed-woman style came to light, translators had to incorporate that alternative into their thinking. Some, like Tyler in his Penguin book,

embraced the new interpretive possibilities, while others, like Brazell, acknowledged them but chose to give priority to modern stage practice.

Furthermore, the publication of annotated noh texts has had a profound influence on English-language translators. Yokomichi and Omote's meticulous indications of *shodan* units transformed academic understanding in and out of Japan. Ito's method of indicating double readings by putting red characters in parenthesis next to the text and his short essays on each noh with listings of bibliographies and summaries of research are invaluable aids in facilitating the translators own research. Nishino Haruo's shorthand methods of concise commentary also lead translators to a more thorough understanding. Each new publication provides inspiration for novel ways of presenting the multifaceted experience of reading noh.

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